Ehrharta erecta
Panic veldtgrass
Poaceae

Ehrharta erecta is a perennial grass native to South Africa, occurring in a range of habitat types from tropical and subtropical forests, coastal dunes, shrubland, grasslands, and disturbed areas. It is highly tolerant of shade, and grows well under a variety of climatic and soil conditions. Although it occurs in disturbed areas, it is apparently capable of entering undisturbed native vegetation (McIntyre and Ladiges, 1985). In Australia, it is classified as a "weed of conservation and amenity areas" rather than a "weed of agriculture" (Scott and Delfosse, 1992).

McIntyre and Ladiges (1985) studied the biology of introduced populations of *E. erecta* in Australia, with particular emphasis on seedbank dynamics, seasonal growth, and shade tolerance. They found that seedling emergence and adult growth commenced with the first fall rains and continued through winter and spring. Growth of individuals was much more vigorous in open habitat than shaded, although individuals are able to grow and flower in only 2.5% of daylight. The number of germinable seeds in the seedbank from a disturbed roadside habitat decreased significantly over the growing season, which the authors attributed to seedling recruitment. The seedbank of a shaded habitat did not decrease until the very end of the same time period, suggesting that suitable conditions for germination did not occur until winter. Large amounts of litter accumulate under *E. erecta*, which the authors indicate is a component of competitive exclusion. Finally, they hypothesized that soil moisture may be the most important variable in determining the distribution of *E. erecta*; the shaded sites where *E. erecta* tends to occur have higher moisture availability. This is confirmed by Jacobs (1990) that *E. erecta* is a weed of moist, shady sites.

Milberg and Lamont (1995) found that fire increased invasion by the congener *E. calycina* into remnant sclerophyll woodland, at the expense of native species. Thus, they advocate restrictions on the frequency of burning. Additionally, Scott and Delfosse (1992) list *Ehrharta erecta* as a species that cannot be targeted for classical biological control in Australia because it is also an economically useful plants in part of its range. Therefore, they cite no data on the potential for biological control of *E. erecta*.

Literature cited:

Jacobs, S. W. L. 1990. Ehrharta. *In* Harden, G. J. (Ed.). Flora of New South Wales, Vol. 4. New South Wales University Press: Kensington, Australia.

McIntyre, S. and P. Y. Ladiges. 1985. Aspects of the biology of *Ehrharta erecta* Lam. Weed Research 25:21-32.

Milberg, P. and B. B. Lamont. 1995. Fire enhances weed invasion of roadside vegetation in southwestern Australia. Biological Conservation 73:45-49.

Scott, J. K., and E. S. Delfosse. 1992. Southern African plants naturalized in Australia: a review of weed status and biological control potential. Plant Protection Quarterly 7:70-80.